

ANC 2F Community Development Committee
August 25, 2005 – 7 PM
Washington Plaza Hotel

In Attendance:

Mike Benardo, 2F06
Jim Cook, 2F02
Chris Dyer, Chairman
Bob Ellison, 2F05
Kevin Ivers, 2F04
Helen Kramer, at large
Jim Loucks, 2F06
Kara McCabe, 2F01
Jim Richardson, 2F02
Samuel Robfogel, 2F01

Absent:

Sandra Biasillo, 2F05
Ryan McGuinness, 2F03
Mike Sheaffer, 2F05

The Chairman called the meeting to order and noted that a quorum was present. He stated that ANC2F will meet on September 7, 2005, and will make decisions based on the recommendations of this committee.

Dyer explained the format of the meeting, including limited dialogue during presentations and when questions from the audience would be allowed.

Approval of Agenda – Dyer noted that 1321 Naylor Court and 1234-36 9th Street would not be a part of the meeting, as originally posted.

VOTE: unanimous.

1321 Naylor Court

Removed per Dyer.

733 15th Street

Woodward Building – Gary Martinez, architect. The structure at 15th & H Streets is an eleven story office building, divided in two portions. The owners are proposing to convert this from a commercial building into a residential site. The proposal calls for 189 livable units, with parking provided (108 spaces). It is located in a historic district, and the building has a landmark distinction.

In modernizing the building and bringing in a new purpose, mechanical changes and roof structures must be modified for the new penthouse and expanding mechanical space.

Martinez showed plans for the primary roof level, and indicated that the penthouse will not be visible from 15th street. The builders will be installing a centralized cooling system, and this expansion would be to the East.

The developers are asking for relief from the setback of zoning requirements for the penthouse. Their plans are to take it out of the public view shed.

The existing penthouse is 22 ft. tall, and they are building to 18.5 ft height.

Louckes asked if there would be adverse effects on adjoining buildings, and was answered, no, because the penthouse faces the alley.

In terms of garbage removal plans call for pick up from the inside of the building. Currently, for commercial use, there is no internal space for a dumpster. The developers will be building a dock and improving the trash removal process.

Benardo asked if the retail space on the first floor would continue, and was answered yes.

Kramer moved that the CDC recommend to the ANC that they approve the special exceptions for 733 15th Street, because it is not incompatible with historic preservation guidelines.

VOTE: unanimous.
The motion carried.

1200 R Street

Bill Stewart – Bogdan Builders, Project Manager for 1200 R. Dave Gilles, VP Construction.

Presenting Traffic Control Plan (TCP) for this project. He presented the committee with a draft plan for the project effecting Vermont and R Streets.

In the first phase, they would occupy the area along Vermont Ave from the corner to the alley for the length of construction (18 months).

Second Phase, they would have to block off the alley in the rear of the project for safety reasons (3 months).

Dyer asked if Bogdan attempted to speak with the neighbors, and Stewart replied that they are in discussions with the church behind the project.

Kramer asked where they were going to stage the construction trailer and the equipment. Stewart answered that part of the PUD is in existing historic row houses which are to be used as their office, so there won't be a need for a trailer. He indicated that their permits for excavation allow them to begin in the middle of September, 2005.

Louckes inquired about residential parking. Stewart answered that the plan is not to occupy R Street, and noted that there is much less foot traffic along Vermont Ave.

When asked how they were going to route the trucks, Stewart answered that the primary path will be to enter the site at the corner of the project: going down Vermont, and turning left on Q. During demolition phase they will not occupy public space.

Louckes stated he is most concerned on commuting through the neighborhood. Gilles answered that they will make every effort to utilize Vermont. Gilles also stated that the builders will attempt to be cognizant of the residents and to lessen the impact on the homes and the neighborhood.

Kramer moved that the committee recommend to the ANC that they approve the TCP as presented, as it does not show adverse reaction upon the neighborhood. Robfogel seconded.

VOTE: unanimous.
The motion carried.

1306 Rhode Island Avenue

Bill Smith – Zahn Design Architects. This end-unit structure was originally a single-family townhouse, and several decades ago, it was converted into eight apartment units. The developer proposes to renovate the eight units and convert them into four units. The plans call for very minor modifications; reducing the amount of lot occupancy; and reducing square foot occupancy.

Developer is proposing removal of the rear addition, to make the structure conform to neighboring structures, modifying current window openings to keep with the same window theme, and adding balconies to the rear windows, with a very light feel to keep it from being intrusive.

On the side elevation, plans call for minor modifications to some side and rear window openings.

Robfogel inquired about trash removal, and was answered that it would be from the alley, performed bi-weekly with super cans from a private vendor.

Ellison inquired as to the location of the super cans, and was answered that they would be adjacent to the rear parking (3 spaces).

Robfogel stated that there was no indication in the drawings for space for cans and no stated policies towards trash removal. Smith answered that these were preliminary drawings and the provisions can be inserted. Smith stated further that they are trying to bring back a fully landscaped front yard as the other houses on the street have.

Kramer asked him to explain the rationale for reducing the window size on side elevation. Smith answered that those windows would fall into space for kitchen or a bathroom and large windows would not be ideal. There are existing smaller windows on other adjacent structures and he took inspiration from that.

Louckes stated that he is tired of seeing blue super cans in front of units. He also strongly objected to the shortening of the windows especially the double wide window because it throws off the symmetry and the side is very visible.

Kramer said that having two kinds of windows is not appropriate for a side elevation. Smith stated that the six pane arrangement is taken from the existing structure.

Doll Gorde introduced herself as someone familiar with the building. She stated that it is not an eight unit building, but a private home owned by a family. She indicated that the structure was right on the alley with no parking. She also said that the proposed windows would take away from the structure of other homes on the block.

Kimberly Balissimo resides in the adjacent building of the structure, and said that she cannot understand how three parking spaces would fit behind the structure. Smith reiterated that the developer is proposing to remove the rear structure, and that they performed a parking study to see what could be accommodated in the rear.

Robfogel stated that the drawings seem to indicate spaces of a small size. Smith answered that was intentional and only for compact sized cars. He reminded the committee that developers are not required to provide parking.

Kramer asked if there was enough turning radius to actually get a car into the proposed spaces. Smith answered that the builders looked at the rear portion of the alley, and along the side is narrow, but that there is room at the access points at Rhode Island and either 14th Street or Vermont Ave. It will be tight but they will be accessible.

Ivers asked whether the developer had consulted the LCCA. Smith indicated that he spoke with Michael Minneman and will be meeting with him in September. The developers hope to file an application for a hearing with HPRB shortly.

A discussion ensued between the residents and the developers regarding car-size and truck access. Dyer interrupted, reminding all that the decision before the committee was whether or not to recommend concept, design, and massing, not car sizes or possible uses of the alleys by large vehicles. Smith stated that the developer is prepared to talk with the neighbors, and welcome them to contact him.

Robfogel moved that the committee recommends to the ANC that they approve the concept, design, and massing of this project because it is not incompatible with historic preservation guidelines. Kramer seconds.

VOTE: unanimous

Robfogel stated that he strongly urges developer to modify their trash removal plan, and to rethink their window design on the side elevation.

Ivers suggested that they get some sort of written opinion on the windows for the ANC.

1110 Vermont Avenue

McCabe indicated that she would abstain from voting, as her employer represents the purchaser of the structure.

Guy Martin – streetscape and public space application. The structure is a 1982 pre-cast concrete office building. The building is being redeveloped with a new storefront and new lobby. Desire is to rework the sidewalk in front of the building.

They would keep the London pavers and existing street trees, and proposes to insert cobblestone paving, and in the paving, 6 additional trees, in the vertical form of a crate myrtle, down in the ground without a planter.

The artist commissioned for the public art project is Mya Linn, whose works is displayed in New York City and Boston, and also had a piece featured at the Athens Olympics.

The artwork would be in two pieces, made up of sound poles with tiny speakers embedded. As people walk through it they will emit little musical sounds with very limited, low level sound. At night they would be lit with little glow lights.

This art form will work in turn with a second piece that is like a clear box of glass with light emitting nodes. The lights will perform random light patterns. It would use very low level light, and not resemble a billboard. Low level LED to be used. Martin admitted that this was unusual in a streetscape application.

Lights are self sufficient, self sustaining. Controlled by computer inside.

Kramer stated that the neighborhood has a large population of homeless people; many of them are deranged, and wondered if there was an enclosure for this display, like some type of unbreakable product? Martin answered yes, they were using tempered safety glass.

Robfogel indicated he was having a hard time imagining the wands, even with the photographs display, and wondered if there was a safety concern with someone running into them. Martin replied that at night there are the lights, and during daytime, since they are made from bright stainless steel, they would be highly visible. He stated that the public would have the same danger from running into a tree, a parking meter, or a street light.

Ellison inquired about noise, to which Martin answered that the only one who can hear the sounds is those walking through it. Sounds would only reach people walking through the art.

Martin stated that in speaking to his development group, they had goals to do something unique to help this block of Vermont; and to bring something more than usual public streetscape with an art component and to give neighbors and visitors something to talk about.

Dyer moved for the recommendation of the committee to the ANC that they approve this application because it is not incompatible with historic preservation guidelines and would be a welcome addition to the neighborhood. Kramer seconds.

VOTE: unanimous.
The motion carried.

1312 Naylor Court

Sara Snider and Alec Raday, are the owners of this home located between 9th & 10th and N & O Streets. They are entering their third year of homeownership. They are asking for permission for aesthetic change to the roofline to cover the platform of their roof deck. They were encouraged by Steve Colcott to make a presentation.

The proposed deck takes up 10x18 sq. ft. It is not visible from the 1315 vantage point. It is visible from 10th Street on Naylor Court. The proposal calls for use of an almost invisible rail of glass or cable.

Dyer asked if the neighbors raised any objections, and was answered none, no objections that they know of. They referred to a page given to the committee which contained 6 of 7 signatures of support from the residents of the court.

President of Blagden Alley rose to say that although the association has not officially voted on the issue, he believes they would approve. He stated that he can't imagine why anyone would have a problem, as he believed their request was very reasonable.

Paul Harrison said that his property backs onto Naylor Court and because of the work the two had done to the home there is a stronger sense of urban activity, community, and living in the space.

Ellison moved that the committee recommends to the ANC that they approve the proposal for the roof deck because it is not incompatible with historic preservation guidelines. Kramer seconded.

VOTE: unanimous.
The motion carried.

The meeting recessed for 10 minutes.

1600 14th Street

Amir Tavakolian stated he was representing the owners of this project. The construction company was asking to occupy three parking spaces on Q Street – during construction phase (3 parts: concrete phase, main phase, going on now; sometime in Sept. will go into skin phase: brick block, and framing, windows). During skin phase, the amount of space that they have to store material is not enough. What they would like, is to move the construction trailer and small staging area. On 14th street, there would be trucks to deliver concrete and equipment. Materials are delivered on 14th and given to the site. They are managing this during concrete phase, but during skin phase, they need to unload brick and sand, and they need a place for a dumpster.

This proposal would completely block the spaces on Q Street. They ask to occupy the 3 spaces and move the container, dumpster, and trailer for 5 months, so that the company would be able to avoid the time impact and complete the job as quickly as possible.

Tavakolian stated that if they do not occupy these spaces, they would have a difficult time beating the winter. During the cold, they may take a delay and then construction would go into January, February, or even March. Secondly, Tavakolian stated, the trucks would have to bring in a lot of extra material for the concrete work and forms being delivered, because if the site wasn't given the space, they wouldn't have storage areas, and delivery trucks and supplies would double or triple in traffic.

Dyer asked if they had an opportunity to do outreach to the neighbors. Tavakolian stated that they had delivered letters to the neighbors explaining the situation.

McCabe stated that there were no trucks allowed on Q Street. Tavakolian agreed, and stated they will pull up to 14th Street, backup and unload.

Al Collins, of 1450 Q Street stated he received the letter the previous night, and took a walk around the neighborhood to perform a parking survey. He stated that parking continues to be taken by construction companies in a piecemeal context. According to his survey, almost 60 spaces are already taken by construction.

He told the committee that they were proposing to take five spaces, and not three. He challenged the committee to come up with a creative and better solution in remedying the situation.

John Grimberg stated that he believed Collins's numbers to be inflated. He pointed to 1400 P Street where Collins said eleven spaces were taken and stated that was impossible.

Dyer stated he did not want the committee to begin weighing the accuracy of Collins's findings. He added that no one can argue that there would be little or no impact on the neighborhood with this proposal.

Andrew Topping, site manager for the project, said that the three spaces in question would be over a finite period of time in order to complete the project efficiently. He stated that there really is a balance or re-allocation of available parking.

Edward Beck said he sat in other meetings for the original TCP and that residents were given assurances that it was not going to change. He said the builders misrepresented at first what their needs were and that was a disservice to the community.

Topping reminded all that they asked for the very least that they could manage with. He stated that it's not a perfect world, he does not have perfect foresight, and rather than ask for the Q Street facility, he has economized and asked for minimal amount.

Louckes asked the builders to respond to Mr. Collins's question about alternative positions. Topping stated that the city will not allow them to be in a fire lane, and therefore they have not parked there. On Collins's point to move the trailer, he stated that the trailer has an important safety function, and is used for supervision, and that it would not fulfill these purposes if it was remote. There would be an increase in traffic if it were not accessible.

Charles Reed stated that he learned it may be that the spaces under consideration are prohibited spaces to public parking. There is a D.C. regulation that says one cannot park adjacent to an excavation project. Tickets have been issued with such an indication. He spoke to DPW and now the Head of DPW is getting involved.

In the original TCP, Reed believes there was a representation that those spaces would be available for public parking, however, he has not been able to find it. He suspects that those are not available parking spaces. It may wind up that there is no parking there anyways.

Kramer indicated that what Reed stated is correct, as this subject has come up in the context of other projects.

McCabe asked what sort of guarantees the builder would have if the parking is legal that they will be completed in February. She stated that nothing happened in the past on time, so what sort of guarantees would the neighborhood have?

Topping stated that there were significant changes to the project she referred to. He added that this project is very straightforward, and other than weather, he did not foresee delays.

Robfogel moved that the committee recommend to the ANC that send approval to DDOT for the traffic control plan modification, as it would minimally impact the neighborhood, and speed up the construction process. Ivers seconded.

VOTE: 10 Approve; 1 Disapprove.

900 Massachusetts Avenue

Nia Francis – Development Manager, Carr America, Acting on behalf of Mt. Vernon United Methodist Church.

This project is complex and being led by a large team of people. Francis explained the team has been working with HPRB on this project, presented at a July hearing, and received support. She hopes to return in September with a revised design.

Francis emphasized that the church is an integral part of this project, and will occupy three levels of the new structure, and proceeds from the sale will go towards growing the church.

On the matter of historic preservation – it's clear to everyone that the gem of the landmark is due to the 1917 main sanctuary. In 1940 an addition was designed by a staff architect in the district government, who was not a part of the community. In 1950, a second addition was built. There is nothing distinguishing about the additions.

Mold and other decay problems are present in the building, and the land sale will allow the church to make the necessary modifications.

Andy Rollman, from the Smith Group stated that this is a real opportunity to enhance the community with the rebirth of the church. He reiterated that in 1917, the church was built. It has a unique expression, with no steeple, and looks like a public building. Greek architecture was the inspiration.

In 1940, the addition on K Street was made, with a very utilitarian look, as the building was made for education and administrative purposes. It was rendered in brick with steel windows.

On Mass Ave, is the 1950 addition, and it's a watered down version of the church, but built with brick instead of stone. They are not adding anything to existing church rather; the concept for the new building is to create an atrium for public space, and a new entrance for the church.

The proposal calls for a designed addition with two faces – K Street in the south, with the classical, modern, clean look of K Street. There will be lots of glass and stone, and once again, a very sleek, classic, modern design.

Mass Ave addition will also relate to its street. They recognize it as a residential street, a sculptural street, and the opportunity to something more. They are introducing more stone and have done some moves to make it more in scale with adjoining hotel.

The designs call for a portico on the north side, and they really want the portico to be the dominant feature.

John Crump, also from the team of designers talked about the two facades – K Street, sleek, and modern. Thin spandrels, stone base, that relate back to existing sanctuary. Atrium is open public space. Mass Ave – keeping with residential flavor, created a denser façade, more stone less glass. Added bays to relate to the hotel. The Mass Ave entrance is to the office spaces above.

He stated that Georgia marble is the existing stone. The developers want the original building to be the lightest and brightest part. They propose a French limestone for the K Street facade, and Gray limestone for Mass Ave. Mix off white with gray.

Louckes asked if the property is in a historic zone or is it because it's attached to a landmark building. Crump answered that the church is a landmark, but it's not in a historic district.

McCabe asked if there would be a garage underneath the structure for parking, and the team answered yes.

A resident stated that it is a marvelous sanctuary building. He said it would be right across from the convention center, and that even with the new hotel coming it, the new church would be a great building. He reminded the committee that in scale it may seem large, but to take into account the surrounding structures.

Crump informed the committee that the new structure would be for offices and not for a hotel.

Ivers moved that the committee recommends to the ANC to send approval to HPRB on the design massing and concept because it is not incompatible with historic preservation guidelines. Louckes seconds.

VOTE: unanimous.
The motion carried.

1234-36 9th Street
Removed per Chris Dyer.

The meeting adjourned at 9:11 PM.